

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

AZZEDINE BELMADANI,

Plaintiff,

-against-

HECTOR SALAZAR,

Defendant.

1:21-CV-3565 (LTS)

ORDER OF DISMISSAL

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN, Chief United States District Judge:

Plaintiff Azzedine Belmadani, of Jersey City, New Jersey, filed this *pro se* action invoking the Court's diversity jurisdiction. He sues Hector Salazar, of New York City, New York, and seeks unspecified relief.

By order dated July 28, 2021, the Court granted Plaintiff's request to proceed without prepayment of fees, that is, *in forma pauperis* ("IFP"). For the reasons set forth below, the Court dismisses this action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction, but grants Plaintiff 30 days' leave to replead his claims in an amended complaint.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Court must dismiss an IFP complaint, or any portion of the complaint, that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B); *see Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir. 1998). The Court must also dismiss a complaint when the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. *See Fed. R. Civ. P.* 12(h)(3). While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the "strongest [claims] that they suggest," *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470

F.3d 471, 474 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted, emphasis in original).

BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleges the following: On February 26, 2021, at Chelsea Piers in New York, New York, Plaintiff “played class gymnastique adult [sic].” (ECF 2, at 5.) Hector Salazar, a gymnastics coach, caused “worms [to be put into Plaintiff’s] eyes and in [his] body.” (*Id.*) Plaintiff has “worms in [his] eyes, in [his] fac[e], [and] in [his] body.” (*Id.* at 6.) Plaintiff went to a hospital in Jersey City for treatment. He has “too much p[a]in in [his] eyes” caused by worms. (*Id.*)

DISCUSSION

The subject matter jurisdiction of the federal district courts is limited and is set forth generally in 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1332. Under these statutes, a federal district court’s jurisdiction is available only when a “federal question” is presented or, when a plaintiff asserts claims under state law under the Court’s diversity jurisdiction, when the plaintiff and the defendant are citizens of different states and the amount in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$75,000.

“[I]t is common ground that in our federal system of limited jurisdiction any party or the court *sua sponte*, at any stage of the proceedings, may raise the question of whether the court has subject matter jurisdiction.”” *United Food & Commercial Workers Union, Local 919, AFL-CIO v. CenterMark Prop. Meriden Square, Inc.*, 30 F.3d 298, 301 (2d Cir. 1994) (quoting *Manway Constr. Co., Inc. v. Hous. Auth. of the City of Hartford*, 711 F.2d 501, 503 (2d Cir. 1983)); see Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3) (“If the court determines at any time that it lacks subject-matter jurisdiction, the court must dismiss the action.”); *Ruhrgas AG v. Marathon Oil Co.*, 526 U.S.

574, 583 (1999) (“[S]ubject-matter delineations must be policed by the courts on their own initiative.”).

To establish the Court’s diversity jurisdiction, a plaintiff must first show that he and the defendant are citizens of different states. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a)(1); *Wis. Dep’t of Corr. v. Schacht*, 524 U.S. 381, 388 (1998) (“A case falls within the federal district court’s ‘original’ diversity ‘jurisdiction’ only if diversity of citizenship among the parties is complete, *i.e.*, only if there is no plaintiff and no defendant who are citizens of the same State.”). For diversity purposes, an individual is a citizen of the State where he is domiciled, which is defined as the place where he “has his true fixed home . . . and to which, whenever he is absent, he has the intention of returning.” *Palazzo ex rel. Delmage v. Corio*, 232 F.3d 38, 42 (2d Cir. 2000) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). An individual “has but one domicile.” *Id.*

There is a second component to diversity jurisdiction – the amount in controversy must be in excess of the sum or value of \$75,000. *See* § 1332(a). The sum claimed by a plaintiff will control if it is made in good faith. *See St. Paul Mercury Indem. Co. v. Red Cab Co.*, 303 U.S. 283, 288 (1938). The Court can dismiss a complaint for failing to plead that the amount in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$75,000, but only if there is “a legal certainty from the complaint that the plaintiff cannot recover sufficient damages to invoke [diversity] jurisdiction.” *Zacharia v. Harbor Island Spa, Inc.*, 684 F.2d 199, 202 (2d Cir. 1982); *see Ochoa v. Interbrew Am., Inc.*, 999 F.2d 626, 629 (2d Cir. 1993) (“[I]n determining whether a challenged jurisdictional amount has been met, district courts are permitted only to assess the allegations in a complaint and not the validity of any asserted defenses.”).

Plaintiff alleges that he is a citizen of New Jersey and that Salazar is a citizen of New York. Thus, the parties are diverse. But Plaintiff alleges insufficient facts to show that his claims

satisfy the jurisdictional amount for a diversity action – an amount in excess of the sum or value of \$75,000. Thus, the Court lacks diversity jurisdiction to consider this action. In light of Plaintiff's *pro se* status, however, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to amend his complaint to allege facts showing that the Court has diversity jurisdiction to consider this action.

CONCLUSION

The Court dismisses this action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. *See Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).* But the Court grants Plaintiff 30 days' leave to file an amended complaint in which he alleges facts showing that the Court has diversity jurisdiction to consider this action.

If Plaintiff fails to comply with this order within the time allowed, the Court will enter judgment dismissing this action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. *See id.*

The Clerk of Court is directed to mail a copy of this order to Plaintiff and note service on the docket.

The Court certifies under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this order would not be taken in good faith, and therefore IFP status is denied for the purpose of an appeal. *See Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962).

SO ORDERED.

Dated: August 2, 2021
New York, New York

/s/ Laura Taylor Swain

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN
Chief United States District Judge